

REMARKS

The claims have been amended to more particularly point out that which applicants regard as their invention. Support for the claim amendments is found, *inter alia*, in Examples 1 and 2 and in the drawing figure, as well as in the original claims.

The rejection of claim 7 under 35 USC §102(e) over Tamata et al., US 6,004,377 is again respectfully traversed. Tamata et al. discloses a system for collecting SF₆ and other gases in which a gas mixture from a gas insulated machine is passed successively through first and second adsorbent filters 4 and 8, a zeolite molecular sieve third filter 9 and a porous film fourth filter 30. Tamata et al. does not disclose a system as presently claimed in which a gas insulated line is connected directly to a membrane separation stage by a connecting line. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are accordingly respectfully requested.

The rejection of claims 1 and 3-6 over the combination of Li et al., US 5,785,741; Saunders, Jr., et al., US 4,838,904; Li et al., US 5,855,647 and Tamata et al. is also respectfully traversed.

Li et al., '741 teaches treatment of perfluorocompound-containing effluent gases from semiconductor manufacturing processes in membrane separators to obtain perfluorocompound mixtures. Not only does Li et al., '741 fail (as acknowledged in the Office Action) to disclose the specific feed composition required by claims 1 and 3-6, or the specific separation membrane recited in claims 1 and 3-6, this reference wholly fails to describe the collection of an SF₆-enriched retentate as claimed, and there is especially no disclosure of a highly concentrated SF₆ retentate as required by new dependent claim 12. Moreover there is absolutely no disclosure or suggestion of the specific feed pressures of 10 to 13 bar required by the claims.

The deficiencies of Li et al., '741 are not rectified by the secondary references. Although Saunders, Jr., et al. does disclose the type of membrane recited in claim 1, it is significant that it describes it as useful to separate O₂ from N₂, with N₂ being the **retentate**. Thus, Saunders' Jr. et al. teaches away from the present invention which requires use of a membrane that preferentially

passes N₂ and the formation of an N₂ enriched permeate. The fact that N₂ may be smaller than SF₆ does not mean that a person of ordinary skill would necessarily expect that the membrane would preferentially pass N₂. O₂ also is heavier than N₂, and yet according to Saunders, Jr., et al. O₂ preferentially passes through the membrane. Saunders, Jr., et al. simply fails to describe the preferential passage of N₂ to form an N₂ enriched permeate as claimed.

Li et al., '647 likewise fails to compensate for the deficiencies of the primary reference. In particular, Li et al., '647 exemplifies feed pressures from 3 to 9 bar, which lie outside applicants' claimed range of membrane feed pressures.

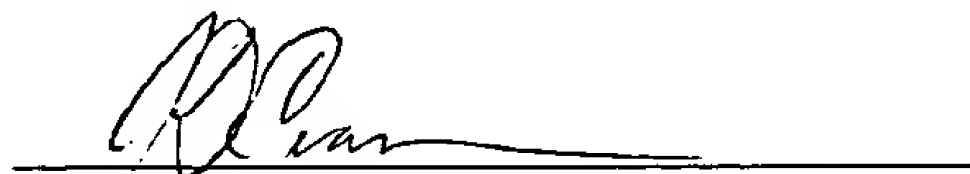
Tamata et al. similarly fails to make up for the deficiencies of the other references. Even assuming *arguendo* that applicant's claimed gas insulated line can be considered a gas insulated "machine" as described by Tamata et al., Tamata et al. does not compensate for the above-noted failures of the other references to place a person of ordinary skill in possession of applicants' claimed invention. Thus, the cited references fail to make out a proper, *prima facie* case of obviousness, and reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested.

If there are any questions regarding this amendment or the application in general, a telephone call to the undersigned would be appreciated since this should expedite the prosecution of the application for all concerned.

If necessary to effect a timely response, this paper should be considered as a petition for an Extension of Time sufficient to effect a timely response, and please charge any deficiency in fees or credit any overpayments to Deposit Account No. 05-1323 (Docket #173/50483).

Respectfully submitted,

January 29, 2003



J.D. Evans
Registration No. 26,269

CROWELL & MORING, LLP
P.O. Box 14300
Washington, DC 20044-4300
Telephone No.: (202) 624-2500
Facsimile No.: (202) 628-8844

Appendix showing amendments to claims 1 and 5-7 with deletions in brackets and insertions underlined:

1. (Twice Amended) A process for separating a mixture of SF₆ and N₂, the SF₆/N₂ mixture being obtained from a gas insulated line, comprising introducing the mixture to a mobile membrane separator comprising at least one separating membrane which preferentially passes N₂ [to obtain] , collecting an SF₆ enriched retentate, and [a] forming an N₂ enriched permeate, wherein said mixture has an initial SF₆ content of from 5 to 50 volume-%, said at least one membrane comprises a polymer matrix composed of a polycarbonate made from a bisphenol in which at least 25% of the bisphenol units in the polymer chain are tetrahalogenated with chlorine or bromine, and said mixture is fed to said membrane separator at a membrane feed pressure of 10 to 13 bar.

5. (Twice Amended) A process according to claim 1, wherein the process is utilized during the use of [a] the gas insulated line to purify an insulating gas mixture of SF₆ and N₂.

6. (Twice Amended) A process according to claim 1, wherein the process is utilized after completed use of [a] the gas insulated line in order to recover SF₆ prior to disposal of the used gas insulated line.

7. (Twice Amended) A system comprising a gas insulated line, a membrane separation [apparatus] stage comprising at least one separating membrane which preferentially passes N₂ and at least one connecting line [between] directly connecting the gas insulated line [and] to the membrane separation [apparatus] stage, wherein said membrane separation [apparatus] stage is a mobile membrane separation apparatus.